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Chapter 1

"Kill them then. You won't hurt me that way. If you really want to hurt me, you'll have to think of something else. They are not my kits." The words of what his mother said kept repeating in Jayfeather's head. *She can't be serious, right? We are her kits!* But a part of Jayfeather kept saying that it is true.

He pushed back the thought. *It's the smoke that's getting to me.* He felt Lionblaze's pelt against his, guiding him as they followed their mother. "Squirrelflight?" Hollyleaf's voice quivered. "That's not true, is it? We are your kits, aren't we?" There was a pause until Squirrelflight spoke. "It's not true. I only said that because if he thought that he was killing innocent warriors, he would let you go."

"You took a risk. What if it was true?" Lionblaze asked with uncertainty. Squirrelflight paused again. "I love all of you too much to let you get hurt. I had to say it." Jayfeather tried to reach out, seeing if he could find any memories, but it was clouded.

"Come on. Let's go find the rest of the clan. They'll be worried sick about us." The four of them left, not saying anything.

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"Oh, thank Starclan! You're okay!" Lionblaze's head perked up and saw Brambleclaw running towards them, fear and relief in his eyes. "Are you okay? Are any of you hurt?"

"We're fine, Brambleclaw. All of us. We're just tired," Squirrelflight explained. Lionblaze purred. *Of course we're their kits. They care about us!* Firestar, Sandstorm, and Leafpool approached them. "We're glad you came back. When Ashfur told us that you were caught in the fire, we started to gather up cats for a rescue patrol."

Ashfur! Lionblaze looked over Sandstorm's shoulder and saw the piece of crow-food walking toward them. "Thankfully, you arrived

right before the patrols head off. I'm glad my former apprentice is safe, along with his littermates and mother," Ashfur growled. Lionblaze wanted to claw Ashfur right in his face. Instead he dug his claws into the ground, resisting himself.

"Let's go see Leafpool guys," Hollyleaf said. "That's a good idea. We might have a few injuries and we need to rest," added Squirrelflight. Lionblaze yawned. *Rest seems like a good idea.* He followed Leafpool to the den and curled up in the nest to sleep. Before he shut his eye, he noticed his parents looking at him. He smiled as a sign indicating that he was fine, which they returned.

Chapter 2

When she was sure that Lionblaze, Hollyleaf, and Jayfeather were asleep, Squirrelflight walked over to Leafpool. "I need to speak to you. In private."

"Sure," Leafpool replied. They walked out of the den and went to someplace private, where Squirrelflight revealed their secret. "I can't keep lying to them anymore!" Squirrelflight yelled. "They need to know that you and Crowfeather are their real parents."

"They can't know! What about your reputation? What about my medicine cat duties?!" Leafpool shot back. *Is Squirrelflight going to risk this? After all we've been through?* "That's all you care about? Your duties?! What about your kits?" Squirrelflight questioned. Leafpool couldn't hold it in any longer.

"I care about my kits! All of them!" Leafpool shot. Did Squirrelflight think she was a mouse-brain? "But my medicine cat duties are far more important! And you're a great mother to them and Brambleclaw is a great father. Did you not see his reaction when he saw you? He was happy! He thought he lost you in the fire! And if Ashfur didn't come to tell us that-"

"Ashfur almost killed them!" yelled Squirrelflight. Leafpool was in shock. *He wouldn't do that! He's a loyal Thunderclan warrior!* "He blocked their path and almost left them to die. I had to tell him that I wasn't their mother so he wouldn't kill them," Squirrelflight explained.

"You did what?! You told them our secret?!" Leafpool yelled in rage. Squirrelflight bristled. "You mean our lie! I had to lie *again* and tell them that I was their mother, only saying that so Ashfur could let them go!" Leafpool couldn't believe her ears. Not only Squirrelflight had to lie again, but she risked their secret! "I can't believe you risked our secret!" Leafpool yelled at her sister, repeating her thoughts.

Squirrelflight drew back a snarl. "You're so selfish! You gave them up just because you couldn't risk your loyalty and that you felt pity on me because I'm not able to have kits!" And with that, Squirrelflight pushed past her sister and headed back to their temporary camp. Leafpool soon followed, her pelt still bristling.

Little did both of the sisters know that a certain gray tom overheard their entire conversation. And he was about to use it against them.

Chapter 3

"Let all cats old enough to catch their own prey gather around for a clan meeting!" Hollyleaf opened her eyes and saw that there's a clan meeting. *I wonder what Firestar has to say*. "Do you think we might head back to the camp?" Hollyleaf recognized the voice. She turned her head and saw Cinderheart talking to Poppyfrost as they headed to their leader.

"I hope so. I don't feel comfortable being close to the Twolegs, even if the nest is abandoned," the tortoiseshell she-cat replied back. "There's a chance we might go back," Hollyleaf said as she padded towards her friends. "We've been here for a few days and there was a lot of rain the day after the fire."

"I suppose you're right," purred Cinderheart. They sat next to each other once they reached Firestar. "Cats of Thunderclan! The fire in our camp is out and I have decided that we can go back home." There was a meow of approval among the cats.

"What about the camp itself? What if it's been destroyed in the fire?" asked Berrynose, who surprised Hollyleaf with the fear and concern in his voice. Usually, he would be too proud of himself to worry about such things. "Thornclaw's patrol came to me and they said that the camp was safe and there was only a few ashes there."

Relief flooded through Hollyleaf. *Our home is safe*. "We shall leave at once." Firestar jumped off of the branch of the tree he was sitting on and urged the clan to follow him. They walked until they had to cross the old Thunderpath. Though it was no longer used, it still made Hollyleaf's fur bristle.

She felt her brothers against her. "Don't worry. We'll do this together," Jayfeather reassured. "Right. After all, three is better than one," added Lionblaze.

Feeling more confident with herself, they quickly rejoined their

clanmates and headed to the hollow. Once they entered, Hollyleaf was surprised that the hollow was okay and had survived the fire.

Firestar leaped onto Highledge and made an announcement. "Our camp is safe. We will repair our dens from the damage it got. But we will survive just like we did with the fire. We are Thunderclan!"

The clan shrieked and meowed, agreeing with their leader that they will survive. Hollyleaf was the loudest. With the warrior code, not only will they survive, they will be able to go back to their normal ways before the horrible fire.

"Lionblaze, Jayfeather. We're home."

Chapter 4

Jayfeather awoke to stars around him. *I'm dreaming.* He sat up and looked around. No sign of Rock. "Hello Jayfeather," a familiar voice said.

Jayfeather looked up and saw Bluestar, the Thunderclan leader before Firestar. "Hello Bluestar. What are you doing here? The Moonpool meeting isn't until another moon."

"I know, but this couldn't wait," explained the former leader. Jayfeather wondered, *What is so important that it can't wait at the Moonpool?* "When you wake up, go to the Moonpool and bring Firestar, Sandstorm, Brambleclaw, Squirrelflight, Lionblaze, and Hollyleaf. There, you will discover a secret," Bluestar ordered.

A secret? "What about Leafpool? Why can't she come?" It wouldn't seem right that only one medicine cat comes to the Moonpool. "This isn't for Leafpool, Jayfeather. She will hear it after the meeting. This is only for the rest of your family."

"Why can't you tell me now? I can tell the others what you told me and-" "You don't understand!" screeched Bluestar. "If another cat learns about this, then they will use it against you!"

Jayfeather took a step back. Sure, he's seen Bluestar angry before, but not like this. The she-cat let her fur lie back down. "Sorry. But please, you must come. It's for your own good."

Jayfeather couldn't disrespect the leader, dead or alive. "Okay. I'll bring them."

Chapter 5

"Firestar. Wake up," a voice mewed. The Thunderclan leader opened his eyes and saw the face of his grandson. "Good morning, Jayfeather. Is something wrong?"

"No. I need you and Sandstorm to follow me outside of camp," explained the blind medicine cat. Firestar nudged his mate awake and they followed Jayfeather outside, where they found Brambleclaw, Squirrelflight, Lionblaze, and Hollyleaf. *Where is Leafpool? Shouldn't she join?*

"Leafpool won't be with us. This is something that we should listen," Jayfeather said as if reading his thoughts. They followed the gray tom to the Moonpool, where the mews of shock and awe came.

"I know that I will be here when I become leader, I just didn't expect it to be so soon," exclaimed the deputy. Firestar purred. He knew that he can't be leader forever, but he also knew that he chose a great deputy to serve the clan after he lost his final life.

"Touch the pool with your muzzle," explained Jayfeather. They did so and started to fall asleep. Before Firestar went to sleep, he thought, *I wonder what Starclan has to say.*

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When she opened her eyes, Sandstorm saw stars all around her. "Is this Starclan?" she asked. "It is," Jayfeather replied. Lionblaze was looking like an awestruck kit while Hollyleaf was confused. "Why are we here, Jayfeather?"

"I asked him to bring you here," a voice said. *Bluestar!* Sandstorm immediately recognized the clan leader. "It's good to see you again Bluestar," Firestar said. Sandstorm agreed. But something bothered

her.

"Why did you ask Jayfeather to bring us here? You could've asked him at the Moonpool meeting. And why isn't Leafpool here?" she asked. "This couldn't wait. And what I am about to tell you is for your ears only," explained Bluestar. She beckoned Brambleclaw to come forward, along with his kits and told them life changing news.

"Brambleclaw, the three are not your kits."

Chapter 6

"Brambleclaw, the three are not your kits."

What?! "What do you mean, Bluestar? They are my kits! Squirrelflight gave birth to them, right?" Brambleclaw turned his head to his mate, waiting for her to tell Bluestar that they are their kits. But Squirrelflight just hung her head low.

Brambleclaw was in shock. *She lied to me.* Firestar's fur was bristling. "What is the meaning of this?" Hollyleaf was bewildered. "You lied to us!"

"Enough! This isn't Squirrelflight's fault," shouted Bluestar. "If they aren't our mother and father, then who is?!" questioned Lionblaze. "Your real parents are Leafpool and Crowfeather."

"What?" asked Sandstorm. "Why didn't they tell us?" Squirrelflight sat up. "Leafpool came to me and told me that she was expecting kits. She asked me to raise them as my own to save her reputation, but I couldn't do it. Until I found out that I couldn't have kits of my own."

Brambleclaw was speechless. *Why didn't she tell me this? I could've helped her.* Squirrelflight continued. "When she gave birth, I took them in and raised them as my own. That's why I didn't tell you."

"You let us live in a lie!" yelled Hollyleaf. "I'm sorry," Squirrelflight said as she held back a sob. "Listen when I tell you that Squirrelflight loved you as though you were really her own. And she has been very proud of you. The same thing goes for Leafpool," spoke Bluestar as she faded, indicating that they were about to wake up.

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When they awoke, Squirrelflight was in tears. Hollyleaf approached

her, fur bristling. "How could you do this?! You lied to us!" she yelled. Brambleclaw tried to comfort her, but she hissed. "Did you know about this?" she questioned. Still speechless, Brambleclaw shook his head.

Sandstorm approached the three. "I'm sure Leafpool had a good reason. Besides, you heard what Bluestar said, both Leafpool and Squirrelflight are very proud of you."

Lionblaze and Jayfeather exchanged a look, before nodding in agreement. But Hollyleaf wasn't the one who easily forgives others. She whipped her head around and faced Squirrelflight.

"Go away and leave us alone! You have no right to be proud of us, no right to feel *anything* towards us! You let us believe you were our mother, and you're not!" Hollyleaf screamed. "I'm sorry," quivered Squirrelflight.

With a hiss of anger, Hollyleaf ran out and headed towards camp. Jayfeather and Lionblaze followed her. Brambleclaw noticed Squirrelflight crying and hanging her head low. Firestar and Sandstorm went up to her and comforted their daughter.

Brambleclaw wanted to join them, but he was still in shock of what had just been revealed. They later left the Moonpool to go back to camp. *Bluestar was right. This isn't Squirrelflight's fault. If anything, it's Leafpool's fault for breaking the code.*

Chapter 7

Leafpool was sorting through herbs with Jayfeather, who was unusually quiet today. "Jayfeather? Is something bothering you? You've been awfully quiet," she asked. The blind tom faced her direction and spoke. "It's been difficult, having to know the truth."

What? "Truth?" Leafpool wanted to know what he was talking about, though a part of her didn't. "Leafpool?"

She turned around and saw Birchfall. "Firestar wants to see you and Jayfeather in his den," the young tom explained. Nodding, she left the medicine cat den with Jayfeather and went to go see her father. When she entered the leader's den, she saw her mother in there, along with Lionblaze and Hollyleaf.

"You asked for us?" she said. "Yes. I did," Firestar replied. Leafpool was confused on why her father didn't have the usual warmth in his voice. Instead, he had a little bit of coldness in his voice, along with disappointment in his eyes.

"We heard the truth, Leafpool. That we're not Squirrelflight and Brambleclaw's kits," Lionblaze said. Leafpool froze. *Squirrelflight revealed our secret!* "How did you know this? Did Squirrelflight tell you this?" Leafpool questioned.

"No. Bluestar visited me in a dream and told me to bring the rest of our family besides you to the Moonpool. We went there and that's when we discovered the secret you've been keeping," explained Jayfeather. Leafpool couldn't believe what she was hearing. *The truth has been revealed.*

Sandstorm spoke next. "Why didn't you tell us this? We could've helped you!" Leafpool just hung her head low. "Because you didn't want to risk your reputation," Hollyleaf spat. Firestar turned his emerald gaze towards Leafpool. "Is this true?" he asked. Leafpool nodded.

She heard a gasp from Sandstorm, causing her heart to break into two. Hollyleaf clawed the ground, while Lionblaze and Jayfeather remained silent. Leafpool heard Firestar sigh. *This is it,* she thought. *This is where I lose everything.* As if reading her thoughts, Firestar spoke. "I know that you had a good reason to give up your kits, Leafpool. I know that Yellowfang did the same thing that you did when she was Shadowclan's medicine cat. But you broke both the medicine cat code and the warrior code."

Leafpool just cried. "But I won't exile you," Firestar continued. A gasp escaped from Hollyleaf. Leafpool rose her head up and saw the familiar warmth in her father's eyes, which also came from her mother.

"You will be punished, but not exiled," finished Firestar. With tears of joy, Leafpool went and nuzzled her mother and father. Lionblaze and Jayfeather later joined in, while Hollyleaf just snorted and left.

"Thank you, Firestar. I promise, no matter how long it takes, I will be the best cat in the clan. And I will never break the code again," promised Leafpool.

"I know you will," replied Firestar.

Chapter 8

Brambleclaw approached Brightheart and Honeyfern. "Evening guys. Do you know where Squirrelflight is?" he asked. "I saw her leave camp a little while ago. I think she's by the lake," Brightheart answered.

Nodding his thanks, Brambleclaw left the camp and headed to the lake. He looked around and noticed the familiar ginger she-cat he loved so much. He then heard sniffles and sobs from her. "Squirrelflight?"

The she-cat turned around and that's when Brambleclaw saw her sad, green gaze. "Hello Brambleclaw. What are you doing here?" she asked.

"I was looking for you. I wanted to talk about what happened," explained Brambleclaw. "I'm so sorry, Brambleclaw. I shouldn't have lied to you. I will regret it for the rest of my life."

Brambleclaw felt sympathetic for his mate. Sure, she lied to him, but it was to protect her sister. That is something that Brambleclaw would do for Tawnypelt if she was still in Thunderclan. He licked the top of Squirrelflight's head while she nuzzled against his chest.

"I understand why you did what you did. If Tawnypelt was still here, I would do the exact same thing that you did with Leafpool," he sympathized. Squirrelflight looked up at him. "But I didn't like that you lied to everybody, even to your family," Brambleclaw explained. Squirrelflight lowered her head, murmuring something that Brambleclaw couldn't catch.

Brambleclaw touched his nose with her. "We may have not been able to have kits, but I loved the three as though they were my own. I love them and I love you Squirrelflight," he spoke. Squirrelflight looked at him with round eyes. "D-does that mean you forgive me?" she asked.

"Yes. I forgive you, Squirrelflight," Brambleclaw finally said. This caused Squirrelflight to have tears of joy and nuzzled her mate. They looked at each other with love in their eyes.

Behind them, a gray tom with dark flecks watched them nuzzle, filling his heart with anger and rage. "Watch your back Squirrelflight. This gathering will be the last time where you can nuzzle with your precious mate."

Chapter 9

Squirrelflight pushed through the medicine cat den and saw her sister with Jayfeather. Ever since their argument, they haven't talked to each other even though their family knew about their secret.

Jayfeather sensed her presence. "Do you need anything, Squirrelflight?" She shook her head. "No, but I would like to talk to Leafpool in private."

Leafpool sat up and followed her sister out of the camp. Squirrelflight sat down and spoke. "I know we haven't talked to each other since our quarrel, but I wanted to say that I'm sorry."

Leafpool didn't say anything. Squirrelflight understood. They never had a fight like that before and didn't even speak to each other for a moon!

"Look, Leafpool, I know that it might seem so sudden to rekindle our relationship but I'm sorry. I shouldn't have yelled at you like that, saying that you were being selfish about your reputation in the clan," Squirrelflight began.

Leafpool still didn't say anything. She was still upset about their fight. *I don't know if I should forget what happened.*

"And I was wondering if you could forgive me," Squirrelflight finished. Leafpool looked at her sister. Even though Squirrelflight revealed their secret, she did it for a reason. Taking a deep breath, Leafpool looked at her sister and said, "I forgive you, Squirrelflight. And you were right about me. I was selfish and only thought about my reputation in the clan. You're not the only one that's sorry."

Squirrelflight smiled and nuzzled her sister. "I also forgive you Leafpool," said Squirrelflight. The sisters smiled and went back to the camp, their relationship fixed.

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A few moons passed and things in the clan have been going okay. Except for Squirrelflight and the three. It was the day of the gathering and Ashfur was allowed to go.

The three and Squirrelflight tried to stop him, but he wouldn't, saying this is how Squirrelflight would be able to suffer the way he did.

"Come on everybody. Let's go," Firestar said. Before they left camp, a scream was heard. Brambleclaw rushed to his leader's side. "What happened?" he asked.

Leafpool rushed to them, panting. "It's Ashfur. He's dead!"

A gasp escaped the clan. Dustpelt dragged the body of Ashfur to the clan. "We found him near Windclan," he explained. "He was in the river. They must've killed him."

"We have no evidence that they killed Ashfur. A Thunderclan cat must've killed him," Firestar concluded. "We will go to the gathering and then we will hold Ashfur's vigil."

As the cats headed towards the lake, Hollyleaf let out a sigh of relief. Not because Ashfur will longer let out the secret, but because no one will discover what she did. Who really killed Ashfur.